

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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R 211410Z JUN 78
FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1436
INFO AMCONSUL JOHANNESBURG

C O N F I D E N T I A L PRETORIA 3482

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, SF
SUBJECT: VAN DEN BERGH TO RETIRE

1. DURING JUNE 15 PARLIAMENTARY DEBATE ON THE BUREAU FOR STATE SECURITY BILL, PRIME MINISTER VORSTER PAID TRIBUTE TO BSS CHIEF, GENERAL HENDRIK VAN DEN BERGH, AND ANNOUNCED VAN DEN BERGH'S RETIREMENT AT THE END OF JUNE. VORSTER DID NOT NAME A SUCCESSOR TO HEAD THE BSS AND WAS CRITICIZED BY PFP LEADER, COLIN EGLIN, FOR ALLOWING THE PUBLIC TO BELIEVE THAT A LEADERSHIP GAP MAY EXIST IN THE SECURITY BUREAU. VORSTER DID NOT REFER TO THE STATUS OF VAN DEN BERGH'S CURRENT INVESTIGATION INTO THE DEPARTMENT OF INFORMATION'S HANDLING OF SECRET FUNDS IN ITS DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL OPERATIONS. ON JUNE 20 VAN DEN BERGH IMPLIED HE WOULD CONTINUE WITH THIS PROJECT IN A PRESS INTERVIEW ABOUT HIS VISA REFUSAL (PRETORIA 3422).

2. COMMENT: VAN DEN BERGH, WHO REACHED RETIREMENT AGE OVER TWO YEARS AGO, WAS CONSIDERED TO BE THE PRIME ARCHITECT OF VORSTER'S "DETENTE" POLICY AIMED AT BLACK AFRICAN STATES. EGLIN TOLD EMBOFF ON JUNE 16 THAT SINCE THE COLLAPSE OF SOUTH AFRICA'S "DETENTE" EFFORT FOLLOWING PRETORIA'S INVOLVEMENT IN THE ANGOLAN CIVIL WAR, THE
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ORIGINAL RAISON D'ETRE FOR VAN DEN BERGH'S CONTINUED SERVICE BEYOND RETIREMENT HAS FADED. OTHER SOURCES HAVE INDICATED THAT GENERAL VAN DEN BERGH'S VERLIGTE OUTLOOK HAS BEEN OUT OF STEP WITH THE INCREASINGLY VERKRAMPTE POSTURE OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN GOVERNMENT. THE GENERAL DISAGREED WITH THE NATIONALIST PARTY TACTIC OF FIGHTING THE ELECTION ON AN ANTI-US BASIS, HE CRITICIZED SAG'S

HANDLING OF THE STEVE BIKO AFFAIR AND THE OCTOBER 19
BANNINGS, AND MORE RECENTLY HE WASN'T CONSULTED PRIOR TO
THE CASSINGA RAID AND CRITICIZED IT AFTERWARDS AS
POLITICALLY UNWISE. ONE SOURCE HAS INDICATED TO US THAT
VAN DEN BERGH'S PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH VORSTER HAS
WANED. THIS IS PROBABLY NOT TRUE, BUT HIS INFLUENCE
CERTAINLY HAS AND THIS HAS CULMINATED IN THE CURRENT
SITUATION.
EDMONDSON

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